

The President. You've got a deal.

Q. All right.

The President. Thank you.

Q. That's the President, Bill Clinton, threw out the first ball—threw a strike, I might add, and he actually warmed up, he said, with Orioles' Chairman of the Board Peter Angelos ahead of time.

The President. I did, and I was on the pitcher's mound because Ripken taunted me up there. [Laughter]

Thank you.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. That's a pop-up.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:21 p.m. in the WBAL broadcast booth at Orioles Park at Camden Yards. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Interview With Mel Proctor, Jim Palmer, and Mike Flanagan of Home Team Sports in Baltimore

April 2, 1996

Q. Welcome back to Camden Yards. The Orioles lead the Kansas City Royals 3–2. It is opening day, and President Bill Clinton was here today to throw out the first ball, and he'll be joining us momentarily, as soon as we get him miked up.

Well, we've got two right-handers, myself and Jim Palmer, and two left-handers in the booth now, Flanagan and the President.

Q. We finally have some balance up here.

Q. Can we get a Presidential chair in here? Thank you very much.

How are you, sir?

The President. Great. It's been a good game, don't you think?

Q. I agree.

The President. And a beautiful day.

Q. What was that first pitch you threw? Fast ball, slider, curve?

The President. It wasn't fast. It wasn't fast, but I had a good time.

Q. This is a good time of the year for you. I know you're a big college basketball fan, having gone to Arkansas. Unfortunately, the Razorbacks were eliminated, didn't make it to the finals.

The President. I was very proud of them. They started four freshmen and made it to

the Sweet 16, so I think they did well. It was a great tournament this year, I think. Everybody who watched the games must have felt it was a great tournament.

Q. I know you love being here on opening day.

The President. I do. And this has been exciting, you know? It's great to see this new Baltimore team. You know, they've got a chance to go all the way, and yet if my count's right, all their RBI's go to Mr. Ripken today.

Q. That's right. [Laughter]

Q. Yes, he got 30 percent of what he had in all spring training. And of course, they all want to get to the White House, because I know you had the Atlanta Braves there in early March.

The President. I did.

Q. I know you get out to a game or two during the season. Do you watch at the White House when you're home?

The President. I do quite often. I watch the games when they're on, especially at night. When I come home late at night and I'm kind of keyed up and I don't want to go to sleep, I often watch the games.

Q. A drive to right center field, Johnny Daemon makes the catch on the warning track.

The President. Great play. That's a great play.

Q. Johnny Daemon taking an extra base hit away from Chris Hoiles. So you were saying you watch our games late at night. I guess in essence what you're saying is that we put you to sleep.

The President. Or keep me awake. [Laughter]

Q. This is the youngster that last year, at Double A, got about 188 at bats, but the reason Bob Boone left him in center field, even though they have a very good center fielder in Tom Goodwin, is because of his ability to make plays like that.

Q. Here's Tony Tarasco, who struck out his first time up.

Q. Did you play baseball yourself in high school?

The President. My school didn't have a team, but we had church league and Boys Club. We had all those. I played in some of those teams when I was a kid. I loved it.

Q. I know you love to golf; did you play any other sports growing up?

The President. Yes, but only—not in school; I played church league basketball, softball, baseball, but you know, everybody that grew up where I did wound up loving sports.

Q. Now, are you allowed to have a favorite team?

The President. I think so. In the basketball years—in the basketball season, excuse me, people understand it when I cheer for my home State team or for my alma mater, Georgetown. And when I was a kid, interestingly enough, in Arkansas, the St. Louis Cardinals were the closest baseball team to us. There were no Texas teams then. So we used to listen to Cardinals baseball. That's what I studied to when I was a boy.

Q. Is that right?

The President. Yes.

Q. I know you were out here last year when Cal Ripken broke Lou Gehrig's consecutive game streak.

The President. I was.

Q. What did that mean to you?

The President. I think it meant a lot to me not only as a baseball fan but as a citizen and as the President now of someone who really wants this country to work well. The idea that a man could show that kind of discipline and devotion to his work and stay with one team for a career in a time and age when a lot of people don't last very long because they don't have the discipline to do it and just go for the big-time bucks in the short run and float around from team to team, or in the case of non-athletes from company to company, I think it really sort of was reassuring, not only to me but to the American people to see that kind of record set and see that kind of discipline and loyalty. I liked it a lot.

Q. Are you aware that Ken Griffey, Jr., is a Presidential candidate and has promised, if elected, to let people not pay taxes for 2 months?

The President. Yes, I'm worried about that. I'm worried about him. I figure that—at the very least he's going to take more votes away from me than Senator Dole. [Laughter] I'm really worried about it. I think—you know, I've always been a big fan of his. I

feel sort of stabbed by it. It's breaking my heart.

Q. You wouldn't consider that, would you?

The President. What?

Q. Not having taxes for 2 months?

The President. What I want to know is how he's going to pay the bills. I'll consider it. I want to hear the rest of the deal. How is he going to not pay the bills?

Q. Base hit for Jeffrey Hammonds, who is two for two—a double his first time up and now a single. So that's a good sign. Hammonds is back healthy and swinging the bat well.

The President. Looking good.

Q. Getting back to Cal Ripken and all of the pressure that he must have been under last year during that streak—and you can certainly identify with pressure in your office—what do you see about the way he handled the pressure?

The President. I think he did what I try to do; he didn't vary his routine. He just focused on the day that was before him. And I think that he must have had the record in mind, but it didn't paralyze his play. Even the night he was here, the night he broke the record, he hit a home run on a 0-3 pitch. So he still had enough presence of mind not to even just take the walk, you know? He was there, ready. He was playing. He was alive to every moment, and I think that's what you have to do. When you're under a lot of pressure, you have to just take a deep breath and do what you know to do.

Q. Pitch is low to Brady Anderson, who has struck out and grounded out. We're visiting with President Clinton.

The President. I think you've got to give a lot of credit to conditioning, too. And the way he keeps himself in shape in the off-season and during the season must have an incredible amount to do with the fact that he was able to play relatively injury-free all these years. And that requires a lot of discipline.

Q. And you know, a lot of discipline—Mike and I played for the Orioles for a number of years, and a lot of people wonder what it's like to play in the big league. Are you enjoying being President? Is it what you thought it was going to be?

The President. Yes. Oh, yes, I enjoy it very much. I'm honored every day when I go to work. There are some parts of it that are a little rougher than I thought it would be, but I have no complaints. I signed on for the whole show, and I'm just honored to have a chance to do it, to make a difference, to stand up for what I believe in, and to serve. It's an incredible opportunity, and if I had it to do over again, I'd do it in a heartbeat.

Q. There are no off days as President?

The President. No. But I always tell everybody—

Q. Even Cal gets one off in the spring.

The President. —even the bad days are good, you know? Even the bad days are good. You know, the only frustrating thing is when you come up against a problem that you know cries out for some sort of resolution, and you're not sure you have the power to do anything about it, or when you get a problem where it seems 50-50 on both sides, you just have to kind of feel your way through to the answer, but you're not—neither you nor anyone else can be sure about whether it will come out all right. Those things are frustrating, but in terms of the pressure and the tension of the job, I don't mind that at all. I like it. It's part of the challenge.

Q. Three and 0, the count to Brady Anderson. Jeffrey Hammonds is at first with two outs.

The President. Come on, Brady, you need a hit.

Q. There goes Hammonds, throw to second by MacFarlane. He bounces it.

The President. He made it.

Q. But it gets him anyway.

The President. No.

Q. You don't think so, Mr. President?

The President. I don't think so.

Q. Well, maybe we can get the umpire to change it.

Q. Could we appeal?

The President. No, no. I went to see the umpires before the game. Let's look again.

Q. Did they have their glasses on?

The President. Yes, they got him.

Q. They did.

The President. They got him. He was right.

Q. We'll be back, Mr. President, in a moment. Take a commercial break, we'll be right back.

[At this point, HTS took a commercial break.]

Q. Welcome back to Camden Yards. Mel Proctor with Jim Palmer, Mike Flanagan. We're visiting with the President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, who is enjoying opening day here at the ball park.

Good to have you with us.

The President. Thank you. It's really beautiful here, isn't it? It's a fabulous park.

Q. We think it's the best.

The President. One nice thing is, look how hard the wind is blowing, and you see the flags up there, and yet it's kind of calm in here, so it doesn't seem to be distracting the game.

Q. Joe Vidiella will lead off the fifth inning for the Royals, with the Orioles ahead 3-2. Vidiella was called out on strikes his first time up.

We were talking about your job and the enjoyment you derive from it, but what is the biggest challenge you have faced so far since you have been in office?

The President. The initial challenge was to try to get the economy turned around and get the deficit down, get the interest rates down, get the jobs coming back into the economy. Now the big frustration is how to make—how to get that economic benefit of—we have over 8 million new jobs in the economy. Unemployment is low, lower than the last 25-year average. But there's still a lot of people that feel uncertain, because things are changing so fast. And now the biggest challenge is figuring out how to keep the job machine going and still give the baseball fans in America, the working people, the security that they deserve while they are on the job, some certainty that if they work harder they can get a raise, they can have a retirement, they can provide health care for their kids, that kind of thing.

And no one knows how to do this. It's a new challenge. We have never had a time before when we generated so many new jobs, and the economy was performing well but we still have people uncertain out there. So that's our biggest challenge today.

Q. One out, Mike MacFarlane up for the Royals. He doubled and scored his first time up.

We were talking about somewhat of a background in sports as a youngster. Did you take any lessons away from competition that you use now in your life and on the job?

The President. Absolutely. Two, particularly. No matter how good you are at what you're doing, most things work out better when teams do it together. People work better together than they do on their own most of the time. And the second lesson is the obvious one: Never give up. It's not over till it's over.

Q. Were you very frustrated as a sports fan during the baseball strike?

The President. Yes, very. Especially that year. It's something that you can identify with as a pitcher. It was the greatest hitting year in 50 years. I mean, for people like me that grew up memorizing the baseball statistics, not just of all of my heroes in the fifties when I was a boy but going back to the twenties and thirties, I knew the hitting records of all the old players. The idea that we were going to have a—literally a 50-year record in hitting. And I know there are all kind of reasons for it, the expansion teams. I know all that. But to see that just thrown away, it just broke my heart. For all us of nuts, it was a bad deal.

Q. Thanks for being with us, sir. It's been a pleasure.

The President. Thanks.

Q. Come back any time.

The President. Thank you. This, however, is going to be a good year.

Q. Yeah, I imagine, and a busy year.

The President. A good year for baseball.

Q. And also a busy year for you.

The President. But I'll still keep up.

Q. Okay. Good luck. Nice seeing you.

Q. A real pleasure.

The President. Thank you.

Q. We'll be back with more from Camden Yards in a moment. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Give me a golf game some day.

Q. Okay. You got a deal.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 4:30 p.m. in the HTS broadcast booth at Orioles Park at Camden Yards.

Remarks at a Dinner Honoring President Scalfaro

April 2, 1996

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. President Scalfaro, Mariana Scalfaro, members of the Italian delegation, distinguished guests: Hillary and I are delighted to welcome President Scalfaro to the White House. We were so warmly received by him in both Rome and Naples in 1994.

President Scalfaro's long public career and his lifelong devotion to the people of Italy mark him as one of the great democrats of our era. He has always been a great friend of the United States. And during the tremendous changes that have affected Italy and all Western democracies since the end of the cold war, he has been a clear voice for civility and decency in public life.

Today we had a serious talk about the issues we are working on together, but tonight it is fitting that we celebrate the extraordinary friendship between Italy and the United States and between the people of Italy and the people of the United States. And tonight, Mr. President, on behalf of all the American people, we thank Italy for the greatest of all its gifts to us, its people. For America has been enriched beyond measure by Italian-Americans. In this century we have been treated to supreme grace on our sporting fields by athletes from Joe Dimaggio to Joe Montana. In the fine arts we've been blessed with the exuberance of Italians in music from Toscanini to Sinatra to Jon Bon Jovi. [Laughter] We have seen the path-breaking innovation of Frank Stella in painting, and we have seen Italian after Italian after Italian grace the silver screen, from Frank Capra to this year's best actor, Nicholas Cage.

We have, as everyone knows, benefited enormously from contributions to our public life from the legendary Fiorello LaGuardia to Senator John Pastore, Judge John Sirica, Governor Cuomo, Geraldine Ferraro, the many Italian-American mayors here tonight, the many Italian-Americans now serving in